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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000321

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DEPT FOR SA/INS
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF KING'S TAKEOVER

REF: KATHMANDU 284

Classified By: ADCM Grace Shelton. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (U) On February 1, in a content-free speech marking the one-year anniversary of his takeover, the King announced no new initiatives, but highlighted the success of his plan to restore democracy to Nepal. He reconfirmed his intention to go ahead with municipal elections on February 8 and with Parliamentary elections by April 2007. Although the King claimed that acts of terrorism were "limited to petty crimes" in his speech, on January 31 the Maoists launched what appears to be a major assault on the mid-western hill town of Tansen, Palpa District. The government continued to arrest political party leaders and activists, and continued to deny phone service to others. End Summary.

King: Visible Progress In All Social Sectors

¶2. (U) Marking the one-year anniversary of taking direct control of the government, King Gyanendra gave a taped address to the nation at 0900 local time on February 1, claiming success during the past year. He stated, "the self-respect of the Nepalese people" had been restored "within a short span of one year." He highlighted visible progress in his goals of restoring democracy and reducing corruption. Reiterating his February 1, 2005 goal of "peace, stability and prosperity" and "meaningful democracy," the King urged all to participate in the upcoming "free and fair" municipal elections, scheduled for February 8, and promised that elections would take place "in all popularly elected bodies" by mid-April 2007. The King made no reference to political parties, but noted that those candidates who win in the election "will be given the security and opportunity necessary to shoulder the responsibilities of governance." He highlighted that Maoist "terrorists" were now confined to limited areas, and that in his visits throughout the country the people told him they wanted peace. He underscored that Nepal had an "unflinching faith" in the principles of human rights. He stated that Nepal's foreign policy was "clear and stable," guided by "how to best serve and protect our interests in a rapidly changing world." He also stressed the importance of economic development, including Nepal's role as a transit corridor between China and India.

Maoists Attack Tansen District Headquarters

¶13. (C) Despite the King's claim to have limited Maoist activity, in what appears to be a major assault, Maoists attacked Tansen, District headquarters of Palpa District late on January 31. Maoists reportedly first targeted the army headquarters, and then set fire to the historic District headquarters building. Details were scarce as Maoists had cut off communication with the city; phone lines were down and Maoists blocked roads and blew up bridges leading into the town. Police sources told Emboff that 17 police and 3 Royal Nepalese Army personnel had been killed in the fighting, and the press reported that Maoists killed 60 security personnel. Large numbers of security forces were out of contact with their commanders. Police also noted that they had lost contact with the Palpa Chief District Officer, and suspected that Maoists had kidnapped him. (Note: Consular officers confirmed that all Americans registered in Tansen were safe. End note.)

OHCHR Again Seeks Maoist Clarification

¶14. (U) Ian Martin, Representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, released a statement on January 31, restating his January 28 call (reftel) for the Maoists to state publicly and to their cadre that it was against Maoist policy to harm unarmed candidates.

More Government Arrests of Activists In Districts...

¶15. (U) On January 31, throughout the country, police arrested many seven-party alliance activists and leaders, many from their homes in the early morning. In Makawanpur District, south of Kathmandu, telephone lines in the city of Hetauda were cut from 0600 to 0900 as police arrested eight politicians. In the far-west Terai city of Dang, police arrested eleven party activists. In Syangja, police intervened in a peaceful rally and arrested about two dozen participants. The government arrested most of the people under the Public Security Act, which allows detention for three months without having to appear in court.

... and in Kathmandu

¶16. (U) The government intensified its crack-down on pro-democracy protesters in Kathmandu on January 31, arresting over 100 political leaders for rallying in areas in Kathmandu that had not previously been designated as restricted. A press release by the Nepal Women's Association, an arm of the Nepali Congress Party, stated that police had arrested 72 of its members. A representative told Emboff on February 1 that all 72 were still in government custody. Newspapers reported that as of February 1, the government continued to deny post-paid cell phone service to 150 people and land line phone service to 100 people, which had been cut since January 19. Those denied service were political leaders, human rights defenders and journalists.

Black Flag Day

¶17. (U) The seven-party alliance planned a "black flag" march in Kathmandu on February 1 to protest the anniversary of the Royal takeover. Each political party had a separate starting point, but planned to converge at Kathmandu Durbar Square at 1300.

Comment

¶18. (C) The King's address was content-free. It clarified the

King's intention to move forward with his plan for municipal elections, but by not mentioning the Parties directly, he still left room for reconciliation should he decide to change direction in the future. The Parties did not view the King's speech as offering any olive branch, and plan to continue peaceful demonstrations to try to topple the monarchy.

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